

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims to read as specified in the following claim listing. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (canceled)
2. (canceled)
3. (canceled)
4. (canceled)
5. (canceled)
6. (canceled)
7. (canceled)
8. (canceled)
9. (canceled)
10. (canceled)
11. (canceled)
12. (canceled)
13. (canceled)

14. (original) A method for pitting and slicing a fruit, including the steps of:

(a) advancing a pitting knife and a coring knife into engagement with the fruit;

(b) while translating the fruit along a segment of a circular first path, ejecting a pit from the fruit while the pitting knife is engaged with the fruit and retracting the coring knife away from the fruit;

(c) after step (b), retracting the pitting knife with the pitted fruit impaled thereon, thereby moving the pitted fruit along an at least generally helical path to a point along an at least substantially circular second path parallel to but separated from the first path; and

(d) after step (c), translating the pitted fruit along a segment of the second path past a set of spring-biased, pivotably mounted slicing knives in such a manner that the slicing

knives engage with and slice the pitted fruit, wherein the slicing knives are spring-biased in a first orientation and have freedom to pivot away from the first orientation and then spring back into the first orientation.

15. (original) The method of claim 14, wherein the fruit is an olive.

16. (original) The method of claim 14, wherein during step (d) at least one of the slicing knives engages the pitted fruit while said pitted fruit is impaled on the pitting knife and the slicing knives finish slicing the pitted fruit after the pitting knife has retracted away from the pitted fruit.

17. (original) The method of claim 16, wherein the fruit is an olive.

18. (currently amended) A method for pitting and slicing a fruit having a pit, including the steps of:

(a) advancing a pitting knife and a coring knife aligned therewith into engagement with the fruit, thereby causing the coring knife to core one tip of the fruit;

(b) advancing the pitting knife to push the fruit against a pitting cup, said pitting cup having ~~an~~ a pit-receiving orifice extending therethrough, and continuing to advance the pitting knife while the fruit is constrained by the pitting cup to push the fruit's pit through the pit-receiving orifice and retracting the coring knife away from the fruit and the pitting cup, thereby converting the fruit to a pitted fruit;

(c) after step (b), retracting the pitting knife with the pitted fruit impaled thereon, thereby pulling the pitted fruit into a slicing pocket defined by a chuck plate assembly; and

(d) translating the pitted fruit in the slicing pocket into engagement with a set of spring-loaded slicing knives and retracting the pitting knife out of engagement with the pitted fruit, thereby causing the slicing knives to sever the pitted fruit into slices.

19. (original) The method of claim 18, wherein the fruit is an olive.

20. (original) The method of claim 18, wherein during step (d) at least one of the slicing knives engages the pitted fruit while said pitted fruit is impaled on the pitting knife and the slicing knives finish slicing the pitted fruit after the pitting knife has retracted away from the pitted fruit.

21. (original) The method of claim 20, wherein the fruit is an olive.